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PROGRAMME QUESTIONS: EVALUATION

Triennial review of the in-depth evaluation of the social development programme

Note by the Secretary-General

In conformity with paragraph 5 (e) (i) of General Assembly resolution 48/218 B of 29 July 1994, the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit the attached report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the triennial review of the in-depth evaluation of social development programme, dated 3 April 1997. The report has been reviewed by the relevant department. The report makes no recommendations.

* E/AC.51/1997/1.

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ANNEX

Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the triennial review of the in-depth evaluation of the social development programme

SUMMARY

The present report restates the findings and recommendations of the in-depth evaluation of the United Nations programme for social development, and the decisions of the Committee for Programme and Coordination in relation to them, and reviews intergovernmental actions following the World Summit for Development, the programmatic and institutional implications of those actions and programme implementation in relation to the findings and recommendations of the in-depth evaluation.

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. At its thirty-fourth session, the Committee for Programme and Coordination considered the report on the in-depth evaluation of the major programme on social development (E/AC.51/1994/2). The present report has been prepared in accordance with the decision taken by the Committee for Programme and Coordination at its twenty-second session, in 1982, that triennial reviews should be conducted to determine the extent to which its recommendations on in-depth evaluations had been implemented.[1]

II. IN-DEPTH EVALUATION: FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

2. The in-depth evaluation report utilized information on programme implementation supplied by the Central Monitoring Unit, and the results of two survey questionnaires. The programme's constituencies surveyed were:

(a) Members of the Commission for Social Development;

(b) International non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council whose representatives participated in the two previous sessions of the Commission;

(c) National focal-point officials on mailing lists provided by the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs, namely for the aged, the disabled and youth;

(d) Officials of the United Nations system serving as the focal points for activities on the aged, the disabled and youth.

The main findings and recommendations of the in-depth evaluation report follow.

A. Programme implementation, 1988-1991

3. Overall, only 51 per cent of the programmed outputs of the five subprogrammes subject to evaluation in the central programme on the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs were delivered during the 1988-1989 biennium, and 55 per cent during 1990-1991. The implementation rate of subprogramme 1, Participation of the population in development, declined from 33 per cent to about 8 per cent in the 1990-1991 biennium. The implementation rates were highest in subprogramme 2, Social integration and social welfare. Over half of all publications programmed were terminated, 64 per cent in 1988-1989 and 55 per cent in 1990-1991.

4. Implementation rates of the regional programmes, with the exception of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), were more stable and higher than those of the subprogrammes of the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs. In ESCWA, delivery was severely affected by the Gulf crisis and its consequences. The Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) has no subsidiary body in the area of social development; the ECE programme of work in

social and demographic statistics is mandated by the Conference of European Statisticians.

B. Findings of evaluation surveys

Assessments of programme orientation

5. About one third of the respondents considered that one or more subprogrammes should be significantly reformulated. Few considered that any subprogramme should be deleted. About two thirds of the respondents agreed that the current programme strategies should continue and should focus on (a) assessment of emerging trends and issues in social policies; (b) assisting intergovernmental bodies; and (c) the identification of guidelines and operational strategies for social policies.

Assessments of internationally endorsed guidelines

6. The three global constituent groups (members of the Commission for Social Development, focal-point officials in United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations and the relevant national focal points) were asked to assess the uses and effectiveness of the following United Nations-endorsed guidelines for social welfare, the disabled and the aged:

(a) Guiding Principles for Developmental Social Welfare Policies and Programmes in the Near Future, adopted by the Interregional Consultation on Developmental Social Welfare Policies and Programmes, held at Vienna in 1987 (see E/CONF.80/10, chap. III) and endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 42/51 of 30 November 1987);

(b) United Nations Principles for Older Persons (based on the International Plan of Action on Ageing and contained in the annex to General Assembly resolution 46/91 of 16 December 1991);

(c) Tallinn Guidelines for Action on Human Resources Development in the Field of Disability (contained in the annex to General Assembly resolution 44/70 of 8 December 1989).

Method

7. The three global constituent groups were asked to rate each of the three internationally endorsed guidelines. The scale used was "Very effective", "Helpful", "No effect", "No opinion/Do not know". These ratings were made with respect to eight potential uses of the guidelines, such as promoting international awareness and increasing extrabudgetary resources. In order to analyse these results, weighted indexes were calculated by assigning numerical values to the points on the scale, from 5 for "Very effective" to minus 3 for "No effect". From these indexes it was possible to draw conclusions concerning the opinion of the respondents on both the relative and absolute effectiveness of the three guidelines.

Overall effectiveness of the three guidelines

8. Members of the Commission for Social Development were positive in their assessments, giving an average overall rating of 2.0, slightly below "Helpful". The focal-point officials of United Nations agencies were quite negative, giving an overall average rating of minus 0.2, midway between "Helpful" and "No effect". Representatives of non-governmental organizations gave assessments closer to those of members of the Commission.

9. The Tallinn Guidelines for Action on Human Resources Development in the Field of Disability were ranked first or equal first by all of the three global constituent groups with an overall rating of 1.3, well over twice that for the Guiding Principles for Developmental Social Welfare Policies and Programmes in the Near Future (0.5). The Tallinn Guidelines were also the only ones to escape a negative rating by the focal-point officials in United Nations agencies.

Uses of the guidelines

10. All three global groups agreed that the guidelines were more effective at the international level than at the national level. All agreed that the guidelines had little effect on resource allocations. A comparative assessment of the guidelines by potential use gave the striking result that the Tallinn Guidelines were rated first or equal first for all eight categories of use. There was relatively little differentiation among the three guidelines in the ratings by national focal-point officials. What differences there were indicated that the Tallin Guidelines were the most effective and the Guiding Principles on social welfare were the least effective.

C. Recommendations and action by the Committee for Programme and Coordination

11. The report made three substantive recommendations on programme strategies, priorities and greater use of newsletters to disseminate information and experiences on United Nations activities concerning Headquarters activities on participation of the population in development, social integration and social welfare, youth, ageing and persons with disabilities:

Recommendation 1, Programme strategies: All components evaluated should adopt a unified focus on three common strategies:

(a) Assessment of emerging trends and issues in social policies, taking into due consideration regional priorities and related programmes of action;

(b) Assisting intergovernmental bodies in the formulation and assessment of programmes of action adopted by the United Nations, with due regard to integrating regional priorities;

(c) The identification of guidelines and operational strategies for social policies at the regional, subregional and national levels, in the

context of internationally and regionally agreed upon programmes of action for development.

Recommendation 2, Priorities: Among the activities evaluated that were conducted at the global level, those concerning persons with disabilities should be given highest priority; resources should be redeployed to strengthen those activities.

Recommendation 3, Newsletters: Apart from mandated reports to intergovernmental bodies, United Nations publications concerning social integration and social welfare, youth, ageing and disabled persons should be mainly in the form of newsletters and bulletins tied to the distinct needs of:

(a) Focal-point officials in national Governments;

(b) Regional and subregional entities;

(c) National non-governmental organizations;

(d) International non-governmental organizations;

(e) Focal-point officials of United Nations agencies.

12. In their discussion of the above recommendations, a number of delegations in the Committee for Programme and Coordination cautioned against pre-empting the conclusions and actions of the forthcoming Summit for Social Development. Others suggested greater attention should be given to assisting Governments in the design and implementation of national policies, legislation and programmes in the field of social development. Subject to the views and comments of members during the discussion of the report, the Committee took note of the recommendations in the report.

III. DEVELOPMENTS SUBSEQUENT TO THE EVALUATION

A. World Summit for Social Development

13. In March 1995, the World Summit for Social Development adopted the Copenhagen Declaration consisting of 10 commitments and a Programme of Action[2] structured along three core issues: the eradication of poverty, the expansion of productive employment and the promotion of social integration, as well as the establishment of an enabling environment for social development. These priority themes further elaborated the basis of action and objectives in each area.

14. The Summit recognized that the implementation of its Programme of Action was the primary responsibility of Governments[3] but determined that effective implementation required strengthening of community organizations and non-profit nongovernmental organizations in the spheres of education, health, poverty, social integration and human rights.[4] At the intergovernmental level, the Summit called upon the General Assembly to include follow-up to the Summit in its agenda and to review the effectiveness of steps taken to implement the

outcome of the Summit.[5] The Summit also anticipated that the Economic and Social Council in the context of its role under the Charter of the United Nations would oversee system-wide coordination in the implementation of the Summit Outcome.[6]

B. Intergovernmental framework for follow-up

15. In its resolution 50/161 of 22 December 1995, the General Assembly endorsed the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action. It also decided that the General Assembly, through its role in policy formulation, the Economic and Social Council, through its role in overall guidance and coordination, and a revitalized Commission for Social Development would constitute a three-tiered intergovernmental process in the follow-up to the implementation of the Declaration and Programme of Action. In its resolution 51/202 of 17 December 1996, the Assembly established arrangements for a special session in the year 2000 for an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of the outcome of the Summit and to consider further action and initiatives. A preparatory committee of the whole of the General Assembly is to be established at the fifty-second session; the committee will hold an organizational session in 1998 to initiate substantive activities in 1999.

16. In its resolution 1995/60 of 28 July 1995, the Economic and Social Council decided that the Commission for Social Development should review, on a periodic basis, issues related to the follow-up and implementation of the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action and to that end adapt its mandate so as to ensure an integrated approach to social development as defined in the recommendations of the World Summit for Social Development; develop a multi-year programme of work to the year 2000, hold special session in 1996 and establish the practice of opening its debate to experts and the main actors of civil society to consider those issues. The Council, in its decision 1995/324 of 12 December 1995, requested the Commission to consider, at its special session in 1996, strategies and actions for the eradication of poverty.

17. The Commission for Social Development, at its special session, convened in May 1996, reviewed the functioning of the Commission and strategies and actions for the eradication of poverty.[7]

18. In its resolution 1996/7 of 22 July 1996, the Economic and Social Council, as recommended by the Commission for Social Development, reaffirmed the existing mandate of the Commission, expanded its membership to 46 members and decided that the Commission in fulfilling its mandate should assist the Council in monitoring, reviewing and appraising the progress achieved and problems encountered in the implementation of the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action and to that end the Commission should:

(a) Integrate, within the framework of the follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development, consideration of issues relating to the situation of social groups, including review of relevant United Nations programmes of action related to social groups;

(b) Identify emerging social issues affecting social development that require urgent consideration, and make substantive recommendation thereon;

(c) Elaborate practical measures aimed at furthering the Summit recommendations;

(d) Identify issues requiring improved system-wide coordination, taking into account substantive inputs from different organizations of the United Nations system, as well as contributions of other functional commissions concerned, in order to assist the Council in its coordination functions.

19. At its special session in 1996, the Commission proposed a multi-year programme of work in which it would review annually the implementation of the core priority commitments and objectives of the Summit relating to enabling environment for social development, the special situation of Africa and the least developed countries, enhancement of social development goals in structural adjustment programmes, and the mobilization of domestic and international resources for social development. The Commission also adopted the following multi-year thematic programme of work during the 1997-2000 period. The priority themes in the work programme of the Commission reflect its responsibility for the review and follow-up of the implementation of the outcome of the Summit for Social Development.

1997: Productive employment and sustainable livelihoods.

1998: Promoting social integration and participation of all people, including disadvantaged and vulnerable groups and persons.

1999: Social services for all.

Initiation of the overall review of the implementation of the outcome of the Summit.

2000: Contribution of the Commission to the overall review of the implementation of the outcome of the Summit.

20. In its resolution 1996/7, the Council approved the multi-year programme of the Commission and directed that the annual substantive items of the Commission's agenda consist of:

(a) Consideration of subjects identified in the multi-year programme of work, including the situation of social groups;

(b) Review of relevant United Nations plans and programmes of action pertaining to the situation of social groups, as necessary;

(c) Emerging issues, trends and new approaches to issues affecting social development, as necessary.

21. In accordance with its multi-year programme of work, the Commission, in 1997, also considered productive employment and sustainable livelihood (see E/CN.5/1997/L.6, paras. 18-24).

C. Coordination

22. In its resolution 50/161, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to ensure an effectively functioning Secretariat, within which clear responsibility would be assigned to assist with the implementation of and follow-up to the Summit and the servicing of the intergovernmental bodies involved. The Assembly also requested the Secretary-General and the United Nations bodies to take appropriate measures, in a coordinated manner, to strengthen the United Nations capacity for gathering and analysing information and developing indicators for social development and for providing policy and technical support and advice, upon request, to improve national capacities in that regard.

23. The Council in its agreed conclusions 1996/1 concluded that the United Nations system must actively pursue a coordinated and integrated approach at the Headquarters and in the field, and between Headquarters and the field. The Council further agreed that a common-system approach for monitoring and assessing the achievements of goals and targets agreed to in international forums in the area of poverty should be developed under the auspices of the Administrative Committee on Coordination.

24. During 1996, the Secretary-General initiated the Administrative Committee on Coordination discussions of the follow-up to the international conferences and emphasized that strong inter-agency coordination would be required at all levels in order to promote effective and integrated follow-up to the commitments and plans of action emanating from recent global conferences (see E/1996/18, para. 43).

25. The Administrative Committee on Coordination established three inter-agency task forces on: (a) enabling environment for economic and social development, with the World Bank as the lead agency of the task force and subgroups on social indicators and macroeconomic and social framework; (b) basic services for all, with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) as the lead agency; and (c) employment and sustainable livelihood, with the International Labour Organization (ILO) as the lead agency. The Administrative Committee on Coordination also formed an inter-agency committee on women and gender equality, chaired by the Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on Gender Issues assisted by the Division for the Advancement of Women. These inter-agency task forces and the committee act as a framework for integrated follow-up and monitoring of the four recent United Nations conferences on issues of social concern. Each of the task forces have established terms of references, work programmes and methods of consultation. The task forces on the basis of agency reviews of their experiences, country studies and related national seminars are intended to identify best practices and lessons learned in assisting social development in order to suggest ways of improving inter-agency collaboration in the future.

26. The final reports of the ad hoc task forces are expected to be completed for review by the Council during its substantive session in June 1997. The conclusions and recommendations of the Administrative Committee on Coordination task forces derived through the synthesis of the experiences in best donor practices and inter-agency collaboration are intended to assist in the formulation of operational guidelines for the coordination of poverty eradication activities of the United Nations.

27. In both the 1996 and 1997 sessions, the Commission held panel meetings with invited experts as well as with the chairpersons of the inter-agency task forces established to follow up recent major United Nations conferences.

28. In its agreed conclusions 1996/1, the Economic and Social Council took note of the coordination initiatives of the Secretary-General and supported the creation of ad hoc inter-agency task forces on the follow-up to conferences and requested that the work of these task forces should be reported through the Administrative Committee on Coordination to the Council in the context of the consideration of poverty eradication and other future themes. The Council further concluded that the inter-agency efforts should promote coherent support by the United Nations system on economic and social policy at the national level.

29. The General Assembly in its resolution 50/161 and the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 1996/7 invited the regional commissions, within their mandates, to consider convening, on a biennial basis a meeting at a high political level to review progress made towards implementing the outcome of the Summit, to exchange views on their respective experiences and to adopt appropriate measures.

D. Secretariat arrangements for follow-up

30. Within the Secretariat, the Division for Social Policy and Development has overall responsibility for reporting and providing services to the Commission for Social Development, the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly. The Division has an approved staffing table of 24 Professionals and 15 General Service and a $6.8 million appropriation in the 1996-1997 budget. During 1996, seven of the Professional posts remained vacant.

IV. OBSERVATIONS

A. Programmatic implications of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development

31. The programmatic implications of new mandates emanating from the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council as outlined above have been incorporated in the activities of the Division for Social Policy and Development during 1996 and 1997 and in the subprogramme for social development in programme 5, Policy coordination and sustainable development, of the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001 (A/51/6 (Prog.5)). The priorities and strategies for social development reflect the focus and timing of intergovernmental

follow-up to the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development. In the 1996-1997 programme budget, a new subprogramme on strategies for the eradication of poverty was added and designated as a high priority. The Economic and Social Council has specified the priorities and framework of the substantive agenda of the Commission for Social Development for the period 1997-1999. The priorities in the implementation of the subprogramme during 1998-1999 will correspond to the documentation required for the substantive agenda items of the Commission which are structured to facilitate follow-up, monitoring and coordination of the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development, the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities and the World Plan of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond and observance of the International Year of the Family and the International Year of Older Persons in 1999.

B. Programme implementation

1. Programme performance

32. Overall, delivered outputs of the central programme amounted to about 74 per cent of initially programmed outputs. This compares favourably with the 55 per cent delivery rate during 1990-1991 (see para. 3 above). The delivery rates of the different types of outputs in the central programme indicate the high priority assigned to parliamentary services.

Outputs: departures and additions in relation to commitments: 1994-1995

	Number of outputs				
	Initially programmed	Postponed or terminated	Added	Net delivered	Per cent
A. Central programme					
Parliamentary services	24	6	11	29	121
Social integration	12	3	8	17	
Global social issues	12	3	3	12	
Publications	80	37	7	50	63
Social integration	48	25	-	23	
Global social issues	32	12	7	27	
Information material	24	9	1	16	67
Social integration	24	9	1	16	
Global social issues	-	-	-	-	
Subtotal	128	52	19	95	74

	Number of outputs				
	Initially programmed	Postponed or terminated	Added	Net delivered	Per cent
B. Regional programmes					
Economic Commission for Africa	35	4	-	31	89
Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific	91	17	49	123	135
Economic Commission for Europe	-	-	-	-	-
Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean	31	10	-	21	68
Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia	17	12	3	8	47
Subtotal	174	43	52	183	105
Total	302	95	71	278	92

Source: A/51/128/Add.1.

2. Implementation in relation to the recommendations of the in-depth evaluation

33. The Committee for Programme and Coordination did not endorse the recommendations of the in-depth evaluation. As anticipated in the discussion by the Committee at its thirty-fourth session, the mandates of the programme have been significantly elaborated as a result of the World Summit for Social Development and subsequent intergovernmental action on follow-up to the Summit.

34. Since the in-depth evaluation, the programme was restructured as two clusters of activities, on global social issues and integration of social groups. As the present report was being prepared, the Secretary-General announced the merger of the Department of Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development with the other two departments engaged in work on economic and social sectors.

35. The first substantive recommendation of the in-depth evaluation was that all components evaluated should adopt a unified focus on common strategies. As described in section III above, the Summit and the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council in subsequent decisions have addressed issues of an integrated approach to social development and adopted, inter alia, priority themes for work in this area.

36. The in-depth evaluation recommended that activities on disability be assigned the highest priority. However, the priorities of the programme now focus on issues and themes endorsed by the World Summit for Social Development

and the priority themes in the annual agenda of the Commission for Social Development. Nevertheless, a significant review of the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities has taken place. In March 1994 the Secretary-General appointed Mr. Bengt Lindqvist (Sweden) as Special Rapporteur. In September 1994, the six international organizations established a panel of 10 experts, 5 men and 5 women, all with personal experience of various disabilities, from different parts of the world. As many as 83 Governments and 163 non-governmental organizations replied to the Special Rapporteur's survey. The survey shows that a majority of Governments (85 per cent of those providing information) indicate that the Standard Rules have led to a rethinking of policies. Among the international non-governmental organizations, the Standard Rules are being widely used for advocacy and new initiatives and in training programmes. Such surveys both in this survey and similar surveys often do not produce policy relevant information. The approach taken in developing and assessing international statistical recommendations might be adapted in future surveys. This includes surveys and dissemination of best national practices.

37. The third substantive recommendation in the in-depth evaluation proposed greater emphasis on newsletters and bulletins. The outputs of the programme currently include a bulletin on social policy and social progress (semi-annual), a bulletin on the eradication of poverty (yearly), a youth information bulletin, a disabled persons bulletin, and a bulletin on ageing (three times a year) and a newsletter on Summit-related activities, Countdown 1999. These publications can be accessed and retrieved electronically through the Department's Web-site.

38. At the regional level, programme activities on social development have been integrated in related sectoral development activities: in ECA, social development is subsumed in a subprogramme on human resources development and social transformation; in ESCAP, in poverty alleviation; in ECLAC activities for women and on drugs; and in ESCWA social welfare. This linkage of social development with related activities underscores the context of social issues in the different regions and reflects attempts to create a critical mass of resources.

Notes

[1] Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirty-seventh Session, Supplement No. 38 (A/37/38), para. 362.

[2] A/CONF.166/9, chap. I, resolution 1.

[3] Ibid., annex II, para. 82.

[4] Ibid., para. 85.

[5] Ibid., para. 95 (a).

[6] Ibid., para. 95 (f).

[7] See Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1996, Supplement No. 9 (E/1996/29), summary.